

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
IO-13 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00
/095 W
-----052014 091824Z /41

R 091550Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6743
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1490

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, BY
SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF CLERICAL WORKERS STRIKE---OPPOSITION
ACTIVITY CONTINUES

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 1381, (B) GEORGETOWN 1432

1. THE TWENTY-FOUR HOUR STRIKE BY THE CLERICAL AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION (CCWU) ENDED, AS SCHEDULED, AT MIDNIGHT, THURSDAY, MAY 4. THE BRIEF, BUT RELATIVELY EFFECTIVE STRIKE (REF B), WAS SIGNIFICANT FOR SEVERAL REASONS.
A. IT IS THE FIRST SIGN IN RECENT MONTHS OF THE REAL INDEPENDENCE BY A MAJOR LABOR UNION (PERHAPS 4,000 MEMBERS) FROM EITHER THE RULING PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS PARTY (PNC), OR OPPOSITION PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP). CCWU PRESIDENT GORDON TODD CALLED THE STRIKE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF EITHER THE PPP OR THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL (TUC) THOUGH SOME OTHER SMALLER UNIONS JOINED IN SYMPATHY INCLUDING ELEMENTS OF THE MINeworkERS IN LINDEN. SHOULD MORE STRIKES OCCUR IN THE NEAR FUTURE, WHICH NOW APPEARS LIKELY, THE TUC WILL BE UNDER PRESSURE FROM BOTH THE GOVERNMENT OF

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GUYANA (GOG), THE PPP, AND ITS MEMBERS TO TAKE A STAND.
B. THE STRIKE HAS AGAIN FOCUSED ATTENTION ON THE RELATIVE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOG IN DEALING WITH THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS. THE GOG HAS GENERALLY DOWNPLAYED THE EXISTENCE OF SHORTAGES, BLAMING THEM ON A LACK OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND THE ACTIVITIES OF HOARDERS, BLACK MARKETEERS, AND OTHERS WHO WISH TO "FRUSTRATE AND EMBARRASS THE GOVERN-

MENT." IT IS NOW APPARENT THE GOG RECOGNIZES THE SERIOUSNESS OF ITS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POSITION. THE ABBREVIATED MAY 5 EDITORIAL IN THE GOVERNMENT-BACKED GUYANA CHRONICLE COMMENTING ON THE STRIKE WARNED THAT "THOSE WHO SEEK POWER ARE DETERMINED TO USE EVERY PRETEXT TO DESTROY THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PEOPLE" AND THAT "WHAT WE ARE SEEING NOW IS ONLY THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION OF A CONCERTED ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY." OBVIOUSLY, IN A HASTILY-DEvised EFFORT TO COUNTER MOUNTING CRITICISM, THE PNC ANNOUNCED A "MEET THE PEOPLE" CAMPAGIN BEGINNING MAY 6, IN WHICH HIGH-LEVEL GOG PERSONNEL WILL DISCUSS THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS AT "PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENTS" THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE FIRST THREE SPEAKERS WILL BE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER PTOLEMY REID, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE GAVIN KENNARD, AND MINISTER OF TRADE GEORGE KING.

C. THE STRIKE HAS UNDOUBTEDLY ADDED IMPETUS TO AN ALREADY STRONG MOVEMENT PROTESTING THE ATTEMPT OF THE GOG TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION (REF A).

2. A MEETING LAST WEEK OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CLERGY PRODUCED A STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE REFERENDUM, WHICH LED THE GOG TO DECRY THE "UNSEEMLY MANIPULATIONS" OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH LED BY 90PCT "EXPATRIATES" (I.E., WHITES). COMMENT: IN POINT OF FACT THE CATHOLIC MILITANTS IN THE ANTI-REFERENDUM MOVEMENT, INCLUDING BISHOP SINGH, ARE ALL NATIVE BORN. END COMMENT:

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3. ON THE SAME DAY AS THE CCWU ONE-DAY STRIKE TEAR GAS WAS USED TO RESTRAIN "WOULD-BE LOOTERS" IN LINDEN, THE PRINCIPAL BAUXITE MINING TOWN SOME 60 MILES SOUTH OF GEORGETOWN. ACCORDING TO THE GOG-OWNED MEDIA CROWDS FORCED THE DOORS OF SHOPS SELLING FOODSTUFFS AND SOAP, AND SOME GOODS WERE STOLEN. CROWD THEN STARTED TO MOVE ON TO STORM GOVERNMENT-OWNED WAREHOUSE, WHEREUPON POLICE USED TEAR GAS TO DISPERSE THEM.

4. ALTHOUGH NOTHING HAS APPEARED IN MEDIA, EMBOFFS HAVE RELIABLE REPORTS FROM AREA RESIDENTS THAT TEAR GAS ALSO USED LAST WEEK TO DISPERSE CROWDS THREATENING SHOPS IN COASTAL VILLAGE OF GOLDEN GROVE, CLOSE TO PRIME MINISTER'S COUNTRY RESIDENCE AT BELFIELD.

5. POSSIBLY IN ATTEMHT TO REGAIN INITIATIVE, PPP OPPOSITION LEADER CHEDDI JAGAN LED GROUP OF ABOUT FIFTY ANTI-REFERENDUM DEMONSTRATORS; SOME OF WHOM CARRIED PLACARDS, IN NOISY UN-AUTHORIZED PROTEST MARCH ON AFTERNOON OF MAY 6 WHICH ENDED IN FRONT OF THE RESIDENCE OF PRESIDENT CHUNG. DEMONSTRATION, WHICH APPARENTLY CAUGHT POLICE BY SURPRISE, DISPERSED PEACEFULLY

AS AFTERNOON DRIZZLE TURNED TO RAIN.

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6. IN REGULAR RADIO DEMERARA BROADCAST (GEORGETOWN'S ONLY PRIVATELY OWNED RADIO STATION) ON MAY 8 TUC GENERAL SECRETARY JOSEPH POLLYDORE ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED HIS POLITICAL AGILITY. BY SUGGESTING IN HIS TALK THAT CCWU STRIKE WAS, ON BALANCE, USEFUL IN LETTING OFF THE STEAM OF PENT-UP EMOTIONS AND FRUSTRATIONS WITHOUT DOING SERIOUS HARM TO THE NATION, POLLYDORE PROBABLY RECAPTURED FOR THE TUC SOME PART OF THE LABOR LEADERSHIP IMAGE WHICH WAS STOLEN LAST WEEK BY THE CCWU'S STRIKE ACTION. POLLYDORE FURTHER MORE TOOK THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED MEDIA TO TASK FOR DENYING THAT DISTURBANCES IN LINDEN HAD LED TO ANY WORK STOPPAGES, POINTING OUT THAT SURFACE AND TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN LINDEN AND GEORGETOWN ARE GOOD AND THUS THE FACTS THAT PRODUCTION WAS AFFECTED WAS SOON WIDELY KNOWN. IN VIEW OF SUCH DEMONSTRABLY UNTRUE REPORTING, POLLYDORE CONCLUDED, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED PRESS AND RADIO IS INCREASINGLY LACKING IN CREDIBILITY.

7. WEEKLY PNC ORGAN OF MAY 7, THE "NEW NATION", CONTINUED ITS STRIDENT ANTI-CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN AND DENUNCIA-
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TION OF THE LAWYERS' GROUP WHICH OPPOSES REFERENDUM ON AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION. IMPERIALIST DANGERS WERE SUBJECTS OF EDITORIAL AND CARTOON (SHOWING STRONG PNC CONFRONTING SLAVERING SWINE LABELED "CCWU AND OTHERS" BEING FED BY DOLLARS OF MASKED "IMPERIALIST POWERS"). EDITORIAL CLAIMS "AGENTS OF IMPERIALISM WHO ARE CARRYING OUT INSTRUCTIONS TO DESTABILIZE THIS COUNTRY" ARE BEHIND CCWU STRIKE, BUT THAT PNC AWARE OF SIMILARITIES OF WHAT HAS "HAPPENED IN CHILE RECENTLY AND IRAN AND GUATEMALA SOME TIME AGO". INTRIGUINGLY ENOUGH, HOWEVER, ON DAY BEFORE PRIME MINISTER'S SCHEDULED RETURN FROM TRIP INCLUDING USSR, EDITORIAL ALSO "VIEWS WITH DISAPPOINTMENT THE FACT THAT A PARTICULAR SO-CALLED MARXIST/LENNINIST PARTY (READ PPP) IS RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM EXTERNAL FORCES (READ USSR)."

8. COMMENT: AS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WORSENS AND THE RULING PNC INTENSIFIES ITS EFFORTS FOR A REFERENDUM WHICH WILL ALLOW THE PNC DOMINATED PARLIAMENT CARTE BLANCHE IN CHANGING THE CONSTITUTION, THERE WILL BE INCREASING PRESSURE UPON ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED. THE OPPOSITION PPP UNDOUBTEDLY WILL ATTEMPT TO ORCHESTRATE DISSATISFACTION TO ITS OWN ADVANTAGE, BUT THE OUTSPOKEN ANTI-REFERENDUM STANDS TAKENBY LAWYERS, THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AND INDEPENDENT LABOR UNIONS AMOUNT TO A MUCH BROADER PHALANX OF OPPOSITION THAN THE BURNHAM GOVERNMENT HAS FACED IN RECENT TIMES. RUMORS ABOUND, AS ALWAYS, AND SOME OF THE MORE INTERESTING SUGGEST THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN POLITICAL RESIGNATIONS AMONG THE OFFICERS CORPS OF THE GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE (GDF) AND THAT ELEMENTS IN THE GDF MIGHT BE CONSIDERING ACTION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.

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PERHAPS ON HIS RETURN FROM HIS MULTI-NATION 28-DAY TRIP TO THE USSR, GDR, NORTH KOREA AND THE UNITED KINGDON (HE RETURNED MAY 9) PRIMIN BURNHAM MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE SOME COHERENT LEADERSHIP TO ENABLE THE GOG TO FACE UP TO ITS GROWING NUMBER OF CRITICS. SO FAR WITHOUT HIM, ITS RE-ACTIONS TO ATTACK HAVE BEEN THE SPASMODIC COUNTER-PUNCHES OF A TIRED FIGHTER.

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